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THE QUALITY OF EMOTION IN MODERN ART.

BY CLAUDE PHILLIPS.

THE keynote to the art of the Nineteenth Century, the art which is neither official, fashionable, nor commercial, is sadness, heart-searching, misgiving, melancholy—now spiritual, now sensuous—revolt against surrounding circumstance. It is the vain aspiration to realize the ideals of other ages, inevitably checked, saddened, and distorted by the unfriendly atmosphere in which it must force its way up. It is the striving to fuse the poetry of the written word with that of the painted vision, resulting sometimes in a true inter-penetration, but more often in an imperfect transposition, which obscures one form of beauty and fails to attain to the other. It is the sweeping into the domain which has not hitherto held them of a thousand visual and mental impressions, of a thousand subtleties of thought and feeling. But it is also, and above all, the attempt to create a new ideal of truth, heroic in fearless sincerity as in all-embracing sympathy. It is the effort, partly, it may be, out of resentment and rebellion, but mainly out of pity and love, to face the grimmest, saddest aspects, the most heart-shattering problems of modern life; to force them, not always with due regard for æsthetic fitness or unfitness, into art; to intensify the atmosphere of tragic horror which surrounds them, to drive into the flesh the thorns which pierce those of humanity, to bleed with its wounds, to curse with its curses, to despair with its despairs.

If there be an element of worship in the art of the century now expired—and great art can lack this element as little as great poetry—it is the worship of humanity, the worship of Nature. For the ideal of beauty, of serenity, of religious gravity, which was that of the Greeks in the great times; for the ideal of spiritual loftiness and detachment from human things—of the

soul dominating and crushing the despised body—which was that of the Middle Ages; for the ideal of things divine and super-human plastically realized with the passionate intensity and the analytical truth of things purely terrestrial, which was that of the Fifteenth Century; for the ideal of intellectual freedom, splendor, strength, grace, and suavity revelled in to excess—of passion tempered by, and transposed to, æsthetic beauty and fitness—which was that of the Renaissance at its zenith: for these things, the Nineteenth Century, in its most characteristic, its most sympathetic and appealing phase, has substituted the worship of humanity as it is, with all its gaps, its weaknesses and imperfections, its spiritual and bodily diseases; but also with its pathetic appeal, its element of what must be called the human-divine, its claim, that will not be denied, to infinite pity and infinite love. The greater realists in art of the modern time—not necessarily those who place their offal, their rags, and their vermin in the foreground, and see of humanity nothing but its warts and wrinkles—have gripped it as it is, with something of the passionate sympathy, conquering repulsion, that uplifts St. Julian the Hospitaller, in Flaubert's beautiful tale, when, clasping the leper in his arms, cherishing and consoling him with all the vital warmth of his body, he sees the loathsome crust drop off, the poor sunken eyes turn to suns, the form and features merge into those of Christ, in Whose arms, pardoned and clean of sin, he is borne triumphant to the heavens. The human-divine element is here always, without any such figurative metamorphosis as this; and those are the greatest in modern art, as in modern letters, who, perceiving it, have with the artist's power, correcting and completing that of the seer, shown through the miserable human tenement—fissured, it may be, and ruined—the light burning steady and clear on the altar within.

And the worship of Nature, too, has not been so much the worship of those divine, awe-inspiring appearances which throughout the ages have been recognized, as the perception in her of mysterious moods which to the modern man appear to run parallel with his own, never failing in response, whether of pity, yearning tenderness, joy, or terror, to him who from the depths of his being appeals to her as the Mother. It is the recognition of these mysterious responses, of the human element imported into or inherent in Nature, giving new color, new poignancy to her

most familiar aspects, which—apart from technical considerations, into which for once it is not proposed to enter—has made the schools of landscape of the Nineteenth Century the greatest that the world has known. I well know that, with a somewhat cheap and superfluous scorn, this view of the inter-connection of man and Nature has been called “the pathetic fallacy”; the obvious and common-sense view being urged that Nature is but the inanimate lyre, resonant only when the hand, the heart and soul of man strike *his* music and not *hers* from her depths. Does it matter so much, after all, if this be so? If to us, the children of to-day, Nature speaks more intimately, more tenderly than to her worshippers of the preceding ages, it is that we embrace her more closely, that we pour all ourselves into her, that we mingle our joys with the radiance of the sunlight transfiguring land and sea, our sighs with the moanings of the winds and the whispers of the woods, our tears with the flow of the waters. Not only do we know her form and outer vesture, her ever-shifting aspects, better than the greatest of the painters of the preceding centuries, but we—that is the great ones in art who speak for us who are of their time—are heart to heart, soul to soul with her. And this is why a Turner, a Bonington, a Crome, a De Wint, a Cotman, a Corot, a Rousseau, a Millet, a Troyon, a Diaz, a Daubigny, a Böcklin, say something to us which even the greatest masters of landscape of the preceding centuries have not said, and cannot be made to say. They touch certain chords on Nature’s lyre to which the ears of our forefathers were not attuned; they unveil, to those who are prepared to contemplate them with love and reverence, her subtler and more secret beauties; they evoke, under what the passer-by deems, or has deemed, prosaic, unpaintable ugliness, beauty of another order, the beauty most suggestive of every-day humanity itself, with its humble, pitiful effort, its patient wrestle, ever renewed, with Destiny, impassive and crushing.

All these distinguishing marks are without doubt to be found in the work of great precursors, who by reason of their artistic predominance have given in isolated instances such overpowering expression to the very characteristics which have just now been differentiated as modern as even the greatest among their *epigoni* of to-day cannot be said to have achieved. What world-melancholy can be likened to that of Michelangelo? Like Atlas, he bears the weight of the earth, all its crushing weight of woe, on

his mighty shoulders! Yet, in these Titanic embodiments of human effort and human anguish overborne by the power of a resistless Fate, he lifts us so high above the mere earth, above its every-day incidents and the toiling ants who people it, that we perceive nothing but gray empty space, through which resounds his loud and bitter cry; and, sick with dismay, long to descend from the sublime heights to which we have been transported on the whirlwind of his genius. And Tintoretto, the mighty Venetian, who in truth, as he boasted, united the color of Titian to the terrible majesty of Michelangelo! Can he not, while showing with a tenfold intensity the human-divine element in beings divine and men the humblest, draw us amazed and unresisting into his sombre dreamland, as sublime as that of Michelangelo himself; and bring before our eyes all the familiar scenes of the great Sacred Drama, without distortion of their true character, yet as world-events, awful in magnitude and in significance? And there is another and an infinitely captivating, a very modern, side to his complex artistic individuality. He tempers on occasion his overwhelming power of direct dramatic representation with an element of poetry, literary rather than purely pictorial, such as gives back indefinitely the glamour of Ariosto and his fellows, the Italian Romanticists. He evokes a whole world of chivalry and romance in such a scene as the "St. George delivering the Princess from the Dragon" of the National Gallery; or in that wonderful piece "The Rescue" of the Dresden Gallery. The vision in this last is of young knights strong in valor, in love, and in chastity, as they come, armed *cap-à-pie*, to the foot of some enchanted castle "opening on the foam of perilous seas in fairy lands forlorn," and there reverently receive into their arms fair, drooping women, as pure in their nudity as the foam which, threatening, curls its huge crests over them. Dosso Dossi, that chartered libertine of the Renaissance, whose very vagaries we smilingly and lovingly pardon, comes yet nearer in such inventions as the so-called "Circe" of the Borghese Gallery to Ariosto, and is even more directly inspired by him.

Rembrandt is as indubitably the father of modern art in the one sense as Velazquez is in the other. If in the latter our greatest masters of the brush find an influence so potent that they are still, to the partial extinction of their own individuality, dominated by its overpowering attraction, Rembrandt's authority

is exercised in higher regions. He is the first, as he remains the chief, exponent of that "religion of humanity," of that gospel of pity, which it is momentarily the fashion to deride as a symptom of decadent weakness, but which, as we shall see, has forever left its impress on all that is noblest in the art of the century now passed. He is the greatest, as he is the first, of those who have seen the human element in the divine, the divine in the human; of those who, embracing humanity with a passion of brotherly love and forgiveness which excludes nothing, make all its joys and sorrows, all its perfections and imperfections, their own. With the magic of his genius, served by an incomparable technical power, but served obediently, as the hand-maiden should serve the mistress, he evokes under the coarsest material envelope the loftiest, the most consoling, visions; he gives the scenes of Bible history and the Life of Christ—painted and told ten thousand times already, ere he saw them anew—with a penetrating pathos, with an appealing truth and simplicity such as no artist, whether of his own or any other time, has hitherto equalled, or approached. Modern sacred art would scarce have had a basis, would scarce have had a starting point, were it not for such inspired creations as the "Pilgrims at Emmaus" and the "Good Samaritan" of the Louvre, the "Manoah" of Dresden, the "Woman taken in Adultery" of the National Gallery, the great cycle of the "Passion" in the Alte Pinakothek of Munich. And who shall say that, with these examples of a realism heroic and sublime in its unflinching adherence to the truth which it transfigures with the glow of an all-penetrating love, Rembrandt does not attain to an ideal as lofty in its way as that of a Pheidias, a Leonardo da Vinci or a Raphael? These ideals, of a superhuman beauty and gravity; of a mysterious suavity crowning and tempering the power that holds the whole world in its embrace; of a beauty and harmony composing and ordering to its own ends, and yet preserving undiminished, all the mighty passions, all the intellectual loftiness, of mankind at its highest: these, the world may never hope to see realized again. But can we in truth maintain that even such exalted ideals as those of the solemn Greek or of his Italian children of the Renaissance are higher than that touched by the great Dutch Master, when, with perfect simplicity, yet with a higher intuition than has yet been vouchsafed to any painter, he interprets anew these sacred scenes just now recalled; or puts

forward the portrait of some wrinkled old woman, who, with all her past history and her present hopes written in her face, fronts the spectator, patiently and confidently awaiting death. Or again, can we recognize anything greater, loftier, more moving in art than those many portraits of the master himself in his solitary old age: the bloated features stamped with the evidence of a tragic and incomprehensible destiny, with the infinite pathos of the unconscious appeal, "What is this that ye have done unto me?" but yet speaking unmistakably of one of the great ones of the earth, one who remains through all this squalor and misery "the captain of his soul"! It is Rembrandt above all who makes us feel that humanity, the most humble, the most abject in its physical imperfection, is greater than anything that we mortals, idealize as we may, can put in its place.

To say that the intense expression of artistic and human personality, coloring and individualizing artistic production, is a main and peculiar characteristic of modern art would be, again, to exaggerate a truth. All great art is the outcome of a supreme power of artistic presentment at the service of a great personality, thus enabled to express itself to the full. What is it that is the chief element of sublimity in the colossal inventions of Michelangelo, if it be not the personality of Michelangelo? What is it that has chiefly held and fascinated the world in the life-work of Leonardo, if it be not the impenetrable mystery that envelopes the personality of Leonardo, the solitary watcher, face to face with the wheels of the world, as they silently move?

It would be approaching nearer to a true definition to say that what in the art of the preceding ages is true in certain main and commanding instances is in modern art true of the majority. The personality of an artist from whom radiates influence is not only an intense, a complete, expression of self, but, with rare exceptions, a summing up of the time from which he issues, and of which, from the very fact that he is of it in his essence, he can develop and bring to maturity the dominant characteristics. Now, the personality of the modern artist can radiate, can communicate itself to widening and ever-widening circles with a rapidity and completeness which it was not given even to the greatest of the preceding centuries to achieve. The reason is to be sought in the fact that from day to day the barriers of feeling, of usage, of language which divide the nations are being oblit-

erated; that diversity of standpoint is becoming unity; that the unity, in the great essentials, of modern life is, for good or evil, bringing about all over the world unity of thought, of sentiment, of aspiration. A Leonardo, a Giorgione, a Michelangelo, a Raphael, a Rubens, a Rembrandt, a Velazquez, all of them indubitably exercised a far-reaching influence. Their fame penetrated all over Europe; and their schools, their imitators, were not confined to their own country or to their own nationality. But outside their own natural confines of nationality they were admired rather than understood, imitated in externals, yet not truly assimilated. To take for examples four masters of the Seventeenth Century, all of them contemporaries, and each a great artistic centre in his own land: Rembrandt in Holland, Rubens in Flanders, Velazquez in Spain, Guido Reni—how lamentable a descent!—in Italy. The highest celebrity fell to each, even beyond the limits of his own centre and his own land. But can it be truly said that they had any vital element in common; that the art of Rembrandt, apart from the appreciation that great technique commands, could then make a true and direct appeal to Italy and to Spain; that Velazquez could then be sure of comprehension as well as admiration in Holland and Flanders? Beyond the fact that they met occasionally in the unavoidable use of formula consecrated by usage, these four famous masters stood at hardly any given point on common ground.

Now, in modern art, with an infinite divergence of aim and feeling, with a variety of outer aspect and technical standpoint that is absolutely bewildering, there will be revealed to the patient and sympathetic investigator, lurking everywhere beneath the surface, these modern characteristics of sadness, sensuous and spiritual melancholy, misgiving, revolt against surrounding circumstance—this effort to import into it what it never before held or expressed. And in the greatest art of the time, but in that only, will be found this noble, transfiguring realism, this worship of humanity in its humblest as in its most exalted phases, of which Rembrandt is the precursor; this worship of Nature, too, not as the awful mystery, cruel and impenetrable as Fate, but as the consoling Mother, into whose bosom we pour our secrets, to receive her own in return. And this is why—to take a commanding instance—a Jean François Millet appeals to the whole civilized world, and evokes by the largeness of his human sympathy corre-

sponding sentiments now common to the whole human race. The Flanders of Memling might have admired, but would not have understood, Botticelli, his aims, his half-literary, half-artistic temperament, with its excess of nervous passion and its want of balance. But the true temperament, the true standpoint, of a Burne-Jones, whether his art strongly repel or irresistibly attract, is readily perceived and judged in contemporary France, Flanders, Germany, and America. Even Rembrandt, in the Italy or the England of his time, would have been admired for the grandeur of his chiaroscuro and the sombre richness of his palette, rather than as the apostle of humanity, as the interpreter of the great scenes of Bible history, who dared to tear from them all the outer accretion accumulated by the ages, to present them in their pristine simplicity and purity. But a minor Rembrandt of to-day, Herr Fritz von Uhde, imagines the "Last Supper" with a Christ full of gentleness and pity, surrounded by rugged Bavarian peasants, His Disciples—or the "Nativity," with a choir of quaint little urchin-angels of to-day pouring out their song from the eaves, and overshadowed by them, rough shepherds from the Bavarian Highlands reverently considering the Infant Christ. This much discussed artist, the sincerity of whose art even those who will have none of it cannot deny, at once obtains a hearing, just because the human-divine element of pity and love awakens at once responsive chords not in the breasts of his own fellow-countrymen alone, but in the whole human race.

Seeing that this is so, and why it is so, it is not as strange as it may seem at first sight that those few great artistic personalities of the modern era whose peculiar qualities are exclusively their own, not taken from their surroundings, not drawn from the atmosphere of their time, to be given back to it with a tenfold intensity—a Turner, for instance, in England, an Arnold Böcklin in Germany—that some of these isolated giants, who suffice to themselves, have taken long to break down the barriers of nationality, weakened though they are now by international intercourse. Though they have forced their way to the hearts of their fellow-countrymen, is it surprising that they still beat in vain against the strong wall which shuts them out from the rest of the world?

The most questionable form of artistic emotion in which the Nineteenth Century has indulged is that of pathetic anecdote and lugubrious genre. Such painters as Frank Holl in England,

Josef Israëls and his followers in Holland, and a whole host of capable painters of the modern Munich school, have revelled in scenes where the sufferer humbly and patiently awaits death, in death-bed partings, funerals, and lamentations over the departed. The emotion thus obtained is but a transient, and not in the highest sense an artistic, emotion. Death is after all so unimportant a moment as compared to all the rest! It is merely the colophon to the chapter of life; and it is surely in the undeciphered text of that chapter, not in its ending, that lies the vast world-tragedy! Death may be represented in art as it is in the "*Trionfo della Morte*" of the Pisan Campo Santo, or in the "Dances of Death" of the Middle Ages, and later on of Holbein; or again with the august and consoling symbolism of a Watts. It is there the personification of the all-engrossing problem which every human being has perforce before his eyes. But the fading out of life of the individual, the burning down of the feeble light, may evoke a limited, a superficial and transient emotion; it is not a theme in which great art can ever be profitably engaged. We are for the moment thrilled with the dramatic force and fire of a Gérôme in such famous pieces as the "*Morituri te salutant!*" the "Death of Maréchal Ney," the "Duel in the Snow." But they thrill us just as a stage-scene well presented might do; the impression made—and it has never been more than skin-deep—as easily fades away. If some singularly rare and beautiful example of purely historical or legendary representation more permanently move us, it is because deeper chords have in this instance been struck, chords more surely vibrating to the very heart of humanity. Take but one example: the famous painting "*La Folie du peintre Hugo van der Goes*," by Emile Wauters, in the Museum of Brussels. The poor, distraught master sits with glaring eyeballs gazing into vacancy, with features all marred by the bitterness of his agony; and to soothe him the pitiful monks, his brothers, have brought with them a band of youthful, sturdy choristers. Obedient, yet, in their innocence, without any thought of what it is they do, the children quietly range themselves at his side and pour forth from sweet lips streams of high, clear song, stainless in purity as that of the angels. As he listens, the staring eyes, scorched with the agony of many days, soften and fill with tears, soon to descend in a healing rain and for one blissful moment quench these fires of hell that burn within. Here we are

moved not so much by the woes of the great painter, whose light went out more than four hundred years ago, as by the pathetic contrast between the sinless purity of childhood and the agony of distraught manhood, the empty shell from which sorrow has chased reason away; by the suggestion of the consoling power of music as the world-moving power that can penetrate where words no longer find an entrance.

One exquisite and essentially modern phase of artistic emotion is that which results from a true inter-penetration, a true fusion of the literary imagination with the pictorial: not a translation or attempted translation of poetic literature and the loveliness of words into painting, such as Burne-Jones and his school have too often given us; but such an appeal to the eye, and through it to the brain and soul, as shall without conscious effort evoke, enveloping the image thus definitely and pictorially presented, the luminous atmosphere of that dreamland that completes and transfigures it. Such an artistic emotion as this is communicated by the early works of Rossetti, so pathetic in their imperfect yet expressive realization of form and their tragic splendor of color: inventions in which the painter is no more to be dissociated from the poet than is—to use Rossetti's own phrase—the body from the soul. It emanates, too, from such purely human and concrete, yet genuinely imaginative, conceptions as the "Death of Ophelia" and the "Ferdinand and Ariel" of the young Millais, painted in his first freshness, when the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood still held him. And, again, it is the quintessence of the charm that holds us in the visions, so overwhelmingly mournful and pathetic in their very exquisiteness, in their very singularity of strange and superhuman magnificence, of the French Master, Gustave Moreau. The preceding ages have brought forth much art that is greater, franker, more deeply rooted in Nature than his; but nothing precisely like this essentially modern product—the more characteristic of one special phase of modernity in that modernity is so resolutely shut out from it. Limitations of space stand in the way of an analysis of the great pages of Gustave Moreau's life-work, the "Œdipus and the Sphinx," the "King David," "The Apparition," "The Fair Helen," the "Galatea," and the "Fables of La Fontaine." Nothing could be more characteristic of the man than the lurid atmosphere of disquietude, mystery and terror in which he has, consciously or unconsciously, wrapped even these

famous apologues of the bright, humorous Louis-Quatorzian poet. "The Fair Helen" is a vision of her whose fatal beauty caused the horrid din of war to ring round doomed Troy, awful in its suggestion of a havoc-working Fate controlling her, its impassive instrument and victim. Where Marlowe in his "Faustus" makes her radiant as a celestial appearance—a very constellation in the skies—Moreau shows her an apparition, beautiful, indeed, yet inspiring a vague terror, and claiming that worship which is rendered to the Infernal Deities, rather than the equal passion of love. The little picture, "The Death of Sappho," of which a good many versions exist, exhales something of the vibrant passion and melody of the singer's own immortal verse. She goes to her death in beauty; and as, lyre in hand, she springs from the Leucadian rock, the shores seem to echo her rhythmic plaints, and the welcoming sea to meet them with its own deeper harmonies. It was left for Moreau's pupil and ardent admirer, the much-regretted Ary Renan, to show her with an infinite subtlety of pathos as she lies dead at the bottom of the sea, softly bedded on the nameless things, "rich and strange," that ocean carries at its heart—august still in loveliness, and in this last resting-place sheltered and at peace.

A great exception comes in here, however. This is the lately deceased Swiss painter, Arnold Böcklin. He is at once tragic and serene, boisterous, exuberant, unbridled in the expression of joy and physical delight, yet perfectly healthful, never swept away by his own passion. As audacious in realism, as intoxicated with the *joie de vivre* as a Rubens or a Jordaens—a veritable realist in the regions of the ideal in which he dwells—he is at the same time romantic without the lyrical pessimism of the true romantic school, and in a sense classic, too, in the extraordinary felicity with which he embodies in living, palpitating human form the primeval forces of Nature. The emotion of joy he can express as no modern has expressed it: as in the exquisite "*Frühling's Reigen*" (Spring Revels) of the Dresden Gallery—a perfect embodiment of the pure rapture that attends the re-clothing of Earth in her vesture of spring beauty; or in that wondrous "Sea Idyll" of the New Pinakothek at Munich. Something of the languor and misgiving of the time does appear, indeed, but in their most attractive shape, in the beautiful, melancholy "Villa on the Sea" (Schack Gallery at Munich); but this is melancholy, lofty,

self-contained, full of resignation to the inevitable. Another jewel of Böcklin's art, perhaps the brightest of all, is in the same collection. In a simple "Italian landscape," wholly without extraneous incident—a villa placed on a gentle slope made bright with its thick carpet of spring flowers, from which we look down upon the rich plain beautified with an imperceptible veil of diaphanous haze—he has indefinably, yet with the most penetrating pathos and beauty, suggested the passionate worship given by the child of the North, as the modern Italian himself cannot give it, to Italy. His serenity, his control over his artistic and human self, do not even leave him in such a tragedy as "The Murderer whom the Furies await" (Schack Gallery), or those tremendous "Combats of Centaurs" in which are embodied the colossal and uncontrollable energies of Nature in eruption.

Whom shall I single out from the great array as the exponents of the human-divine in humanity as it is? Two names suggest themselves at once—those of two artists whose productions, absolutely divergent in outward aim and in technical process, have this in common, that through every manifestation of creative genius goes out a great heart-beat to Man, and to the Nature that speaks of him; that they seek to evolve from the ardent and loving contemplation of Man, as he is, in his place in Nature, a great synthetic picture of the one indissolubly bound to the other, which shall be vast in its generalization, in its aspiration to the higher, the less individualized, truth; yet shall never seek to replace it by the false ideal of freezing conventionality, or lose the consoling human warmth which sends its inward rays straight from the eyes to the heart of the beholder. I refer to Mr. Watts amongst Englishmen, to Jean François Millet among Frenchmen.

No master of the century had painted so great a gallery of portraits, has re-created and interpreted anew for the world so many noble men and gracious women, as Watts; and I venture to say this, bearing in mind the achievements of David, Ingres, Franz von Lenbach, Elie-Delaunay, Bonnat, John Everett Millais, and J. S. Sargent. Physical vitality, the actual moment of being, of volition—these things have been much better represented by others. But the entire man, his past, present, and future, enveloped by the painter in the glow of brotherly love and sympathy, this thing has never been so given in art since the great Venetians painted in the Sixteenth Century, since Rembrandt painted in the

Seventeenth. Watts's crying sin is that, in the very excess of his yearning love for his fellow man, he must needs play the preacher, must needs step into the pulpit and thence address alternately warnings and consolations to the world. Still, his greater, simpler allegories, "Love and Death," "Time, Death and Judgment," and "Hope," are immortal; and with them I would class for greatness of conception such noble pages of didactic art as "The Repentance of Eve" and "The Death of Cain." How can the world ever forget the white-robed, resistless Death, too mighty for violence or haste, that with majestic gesture thrusts away into nothingness bright, rose-laden Love, who weeps as he drops his burden of earthly joy, but obeys? Or "Hope," the most appealing figure in modern art? Robed in the paler colors of the sky, she is seated on the globe; all about her palpitate the azure heavens, and, set in their clear depth, there thrills the radiance of a single star. Blindfolded and submissive, she weeps as she bends over her lyre, all the cords of which, save the one only, have snapped. But yet she harps on, in patience; for the one string vibrates still, and the star's brightness is still above her. But if the cord snap, or the star be lost in the heavens? What then? This is, indeed, a modern yet a noble "Hope," the creation of one who faces all the misgiving, all the suffering, of mankind, yet refuses to desist from striving, or to despair.

Jean François Millet has assuredly not deliberately reasoned out his view of Man and Nature, as he has so often been accused of doing. His peasants are not consciously "ambitious," as Delacroix once called them. With a synthetic power like to that of the Greeks, and built, much in the way that they built, on the basis of a resolute and sustained study of Nature, Millet has evolved all the rhythmic beauty of outline and movement that is in the humblest human creatures; so setting them, moreover, in their right place in Nature that the one cannot be conceived of without the other. But much more than this. Not, like Watts, by attempted argument, but by the irresistible impression on the eye, the heart, and soul of the beholder of the painted image, enlarged to the proportions of heroic truth, he has presented, through the individual peasant, the type, not only of the rustic, but of Man; he has shown humanity perpetually tied to, perpetually grappling with, Nature, sometimes a mother, sometimes, alas! a cruel stepmother. He has shown man face to face with the

simplest, the vastest, problems of life and eternity. If the "Gleaners" of the Louvre has all the noble, sweeping movement of a fine Greek relief, there must be placed high above it the famous "Sower," the splendid rhythm, the solemn conception, of which suggest mysteriously, beyond the patient endurance, beyond the mortality, of the individual, the eternity of life, the everlasting "*werden*" or progression of the world. The spiritual beauty of the "Angélus" has with such irresistible appeal made its way to all hearts that it need not here be analyzed afresh. But "The Shepherdess"—surrounded by her quiet flock of sheep looming large against the sky—face to face, as she knits, with the great, insoluble problems of the universe unrolled before her, yet undecipherable! Or the peasant mother watching over her child by candle-light in the quiet night! Or the shepherd bringing his flock to the fold under the deep, mysterious azure of the starlight! Millet rises, perhaps, higher still when he depicts the limitless plain at sunrise or sunset, giving, with its gentle, never-ending undulations and its final merging into the sky, a conception of sublimity far higher than that which could be evoked by the loftiest mountain with its peaks aspiring to the very heavens! "*L'Homme à la Houe*," with "*Le Vigneron*," is an exception in the life-work of the French master, since it is full of conscious revolt, of conscious protest. This strong repellent rustic, who, beneath the gray skies, laboring far from his fellows, strikes his hoe into the earth, and rests for one moment—beyond hope as he is beyond despair—has the power to endure, yet not with uncomplaining acquiescence to accept the crushing load imposed by Fate. A bitter note of revolt, an arraignment of Providence, seems to ring through the air as we gaze—the protest, less of the suffering creature, too stolid to challenge his enemy, than of Millet himself, who for once deliberately sets to work to disquiet and affright us with the very simplicity of a terrible truth.

Puvis de Chavannes stands alone among his contemporaries as the monumental decorator who, in modern times, has first broken away from the formula of the Sixteenth Century, worn with too constant usage; as the master who, while seeming to emulate the large and expressive simplicity of Giotto and the Sienese of the Fourteenth Century—a simplicity arrived at, however, by an entirely different and, indeed, an absolutely opposite process—has maintained a standpoint entirely lofty and noble, and, for all its

resolute selection of the essential only, entirely modern. Comparisons have often been drawn between Puvis de Chavannes on the one hand and Burne-Jones on the other; but none could possibly be less fruitful, unless they be made to show that in spirit the art of the one is absolutely the antithesis of the art of the other. The life-work of Burne-Jones is a protest against what seems to him dreary, sordid, and unlovely in the world into which he is born. His art suggests a lifting of garments in sadness, in aversion and disgust, so that the thorns and the thistles which sting and disfigure humanity may not cling to them. He will make for himself a paradise of glowing, shifting color, of delicate fancies, the reflection of the poet's dreams—a paradise in which, to stimulate the appetite jaded by the fulness of perfection in art, the forms shall be those of the Florentines and the Paduans of the Fifteenth Century; with a step forwards on occasion toward Leonardo da Vinci, but as frequently with a great step backwards toward the Twelfth Century and the great stone images of Chartres. But how sorry and empty a paradise is this world of his, which knows neither joy nor sorrow, but only the overmastering languor of exhaustion and despair! In the "*Chant d'Amour*" Burne-Jones has sought, and not wholly without success, to combine the beauties of Botticelli and Giorgione. Yet within the golden casket so fair to the eye what mournful emptiness, what a lack of all true passion and vitality! His great "Fortune," a magnificent piece of work of its kind, is a huge, looming Fate, sleeping the world-sleep, as, unmindful and unconscious, she moves the immeasurable Wheel on which king and beggar alike are whirled through space. Of Hope—even the Hope of Watts, sister to Despair—there is no question. Doubts or misgivings in connection with the destiny of man do not even suggest themselves; they are, save as quaint conceits and emblems, outside the interests of this curious and consummate master.

Puvis de Chavannes, even though these generalized and rhythmically harmonious compositions of his, with their muted yet incomparably effective harmonies—of blue, purple, violet, lilac, palest yellows, and silver whites—are in their vaporous ideality of no place and of no time, bases his entire art on the worship of humanity throughout the ages; but above all *he* dwells in his *own* time. He sees it from above, so that its smallnesses and disfiguring blots vanish, and expresses his great conception in

visions of pure and consoling beauty, in which the belief in the human race and its destinies triumphantly asserts itself. Though in his life-work the appealing note of doubt and despondency is not wholly wanting—we recognize it, for instance, in the pathetic "*Pauvre Pêcheur*" of the Luxembourg—the great French master looks forward resolutely and with a noble serenity, from which, all the same, close kinship and a kind of watchful sympathy with humanity are never absent. In this, as in many other respects, he stands almost solitary in his century.

Nothing is more disappointing than the absence of the deeper human note in the work of one of the greatest living masters of the brush—the greatest, I had almost said—Mr. J. S. Sargent. He descends from two of the most admirable, yet two of the coldest and most self-possessed, of masters—from Velazquez on the one side, from Sir Joshua Reynolds on the other. Of the one he has the singular power of expressive and wholly unconventional pictorial statement which makes every subject that he approaches his own, and, moreover, the wonderful strength and certainty of execution; of the other he has the audacious momentariness, the delight in the exterior graces of womanhood, the delight also in the vigor of intellectual manhood. They strangely misunderstand him who read into his work sarcasm, contemptuous cynicism, the deliberate effort to bring to the surface hidden defects of mind and body. He prefers, as we must infer, to keep humanity at arms' length; to sum up its physical and mental characteristics, without any diving into hidden depths such as only the intuition born of a patient and loving sympathy can lay bare; to study its outward appearances with a keen but never malevolent curiosity; to fasten upon those points which he deems vital and expressive, and by emphasizing them, to amuse himself, and relieve with a sharp and stimulating accent of his own the monotony of the human individuality in its modern aspects and developments. Mr. Sargent appears feverish in the excess of his vitality; yet, beneath this purely exterior characteristic, he is serene and unruffled. But from this serenity no vivifying warmth goes out; and there is in this very want, this very incapacity to get to the heart of things, on the part of one of the most strenuous and brilliant artists of the time, something intensely pathetic. We are surprised, astonished, delighted by unceasing displays of inventiveness and power in his vast gallery of portraits; but never

deeply moved, as at their best a Watts, a Lenbach, a Millais have power to move us.

And now come the worshippers of Nature, a great band, who have expressed more, if more vaguely, than even those among their fellows whose study has been Man, or Nature chiefly as the setting of Man. Landscape art at its highest is in this akin to music, that it can evoke a thousand impressions, a thousand emotions, which evaporate altogether when we strive to crystallize them into words. Thus, to attempt in a few bald phrases a definition of the artistic idiosyncrasy, the power to move, of a great master of landscape, of a great nature-worshipper, is to be overbold, and, I fear, to court failure. The earlier half of the century is overshadowed in England by the gigantic individuality of Turner—no figure representing and summing up his own time, but a colossus rising solitary from the plain, and cloud-crowned round its summit. He is ever, even in his first period, the high-priest of Nature, approaching her simplest and most familiar aspects with a kind of religious gravity and awe. In his second period, he takes great joy in the myriad beauties of the world, as they unfold themselves in every direction to his astonished and delighted gaze. It is the last and greatest period, however, that shows the true Turner, the Titan oppressed by an overwhelming world-sadness. He is then no longer content to interpret Nature, to revel in every detail of her loveliness, but aspires to mould her to his own ends, to fuse her in the crucible of his genius, to extract from her appearances, that but serve as the starting point for his fiery conceptions, dream-visions as radiantly beautiful, in their dazzling vesture of light and color, as they are infinitely mournful; and mournful with a sadness that is not of humanity, but, as it were, of some archangel brooding over infinite beauty and infinite woe. To this final phase of Turner's production the much-abused phrase "*Le paysage est un état d'âme*," may, nay must, be applied, if it is to be understood. Even in this period—in such miracles of the brush, for instance, as "The Burial of Wilkie" and "Rain, Steam, and Speed," at the National Gallery—he pauses, on occasion, to represent, to evoke, to suggest, as no landscape painter ever did before. It is here, indeed, that he is the arch-impressionist; but he begins, let us remember, where the impressionists of a later day leave off, inasmuch as, beyond the shifting appearances, beyond the mere outward phenomena of the

world, he, half lifting the veil, shows the hidden depths that through the eye make indelible impression on the imagination. But, more often, the painted vision serves less to reveal sublime beauties of earth and sky—of those that none but he has attempted to fix on the canvas—than unconsciously to lay bare the yearnings of a great human soul, whose pain, having no human origin, can by no means be assuaged.

It is among the poet-painters of France, and chiefly among those whom, for the sake of convenience, we still class roughly as of the Barbizon school, that we find the truest interpreters of Nature, those who most pathetically and reverently draw to the surface the mysterious analogies between her moods and those of man. With Jean François Millet we have already dealt. Corot is among the most serene of moderns; he has something of the contemplative melancholy of a Claude, but none of the world-sadness of a Turner. For him the hum of the world, the turmoil, the storm and stress of life are not, indeed, put away, but put a little on one side. His are the moments of exquisite pause, when Man and Nature are one in a gentle and reposeful harmony, when he, resting in her bosom, dreams beautiful, soothing dreams, disturbed by no harsh note of struggle or suffering, yet suffused with the human warmth without which there is no true nobility, no true beauty. Daubigny is nearer our hearts. It is he above all who in these humble, everyday scenes, of no awe-striking or romantic majesty, pictures human life as it is, and shows Nature the Consoler, the Mother. With no forced note, with no distortion of natural truth, he expresses youth and hope in some orchard-scene in the blossom-laden spring; foreboding or despair in some lurid, fitful moonrise over unfruitful fields; calm, resignation, the pathetic acceptance of the inevitable, in those appealing river-scenes in which the quiet stream flows, familiar and confiding, through banks green to the edge, bearing on its slope some village hamlet with its crown of church towers. Théodore Rousseau, more various, more dramatic in his interpretations, has expressed in almost every phase of Nature almost every mood of man—the serene, the reposeful, the tragic alike. Troyon is the coldest, the most composed, of the group, and his too unruffled serenity, his absolute self-control, but rarely appeal to the beholder. There are great exceptions, however, in his life-work, and among them that beautiful morning scene in the Louvre,

"Boeufs se rendant au Labour," which breathes forth in all simplicity a spirit of hope, of thanksgiving and prayer. Claude Monet, the greatest living landscape painter of his school, the *chef-d'école* of the elder impressionists, looks at Nature from a wholly different standpoint. He delights in her beauty for itself, and not for anything that it suggests. He is content to stand as the admiring onlooker, to note—as he does with a magic skill that few, if any, have possessed before him—the rush of the wind through the shining leaves and over the cornfields blazing with their red and gold; the snow-scene of gray-green, black and silver, lovely in its very nakedness; the sparkle of the winter air and the prismatic radiance of the clear winter sunset. Humanity indefinitely at the heart of all these lovely appearances, which he is content to admire for themselves and to present with dazzling brilliancy, but which he cannot assimilate and interpret anew, as one would who had them in his very soul: this is what Monet does not suggest. And this is why his art, epoch-making as it is as regards technique, has obtained no greater hold on the world.

Mr. Whistler, with that splendid arrogance of his, so nearly akin to that of Lucifer himself, would, no doubt, scornfully repudiate any interpreter or any interpretation of his work. And yet his art is for the world, and by the world he must ultimately be judged. It is not alone the subtlety of vision, the certainty of hand, the reticence in beauty, shown in these "Nocturnes in Blue and Gold," these "Symphonies" and "Notes" of his, that make them memorable things. It is also a certain harmonious and moving beauty in the presentment, which, omitting everything unessential from the artist's point of view, yet leaves a vision no less soothing to the soul than to the eye. He is the poet-painter who has taught us to see the loveliness of the Thames at night, the fairness of the great throbbing city wrapped in her luminous veil and put to rest; as Wordsworth was the poet who taught us to see its unsullied morning beauties. Save that the bard sings of sunrise, and the painter loves to depict the pale azure of evening, with its accents of golden light, we might perfectly well apply to some of Mr. Whistler's "Nocturnes" the famous lines:

"Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep.
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!"

It is too early to indulge in prognostications as to the future of art in the new century, at the very threshold of which we still stand. That the art will be as the life may be accepted as certain, judging from the past. Unless by standing still it is to freeze, and become meaningless in its repetition of pictorial ideas and formulas, of phases of feeling and modes of expression, which in the Nineteenth Century evolved themselves naturally out of a period of extraordinary change and extraordinary perturbation. The attempt has here been to show this period as one of doubt and despondency that has yet not been content with mere negation; of heart-searching and of struggle, no less internal than external; of pathetic striving after new ideals and new objects of worship. The art of the Nineteenth Century may compare, if not in the greatness of its protagonists, or in the artistic worth of the treasure left behind, yet in the wonderful variety of its productions, in the intensity of its passionate effort in every direction, with that of any preceding period. In one respect it has an interest to which that of even the greatest epochs cannot pretend in the same measure. To those who know how to read it reveals every shade of feeling, every shade of thought, every aspiration of the time which it represents; it constitutes an invaluable commentary on what we may call the psychical history of the human race during the period which it covers—that history which can never in its subtlest phases be exhaustively set out in words. The true glory of this art, when it is seen from the right distance by those who are to come after us, will surely be that, in its noblest and most vital aspects, it has been colored throughout with an ardent love and sympathy for humanity as it is, with a true sense of the beauty that is in it, not because it may be lifted by genius, by heroism, by spiritual or physical beauty, to heights sublime above the common level of man, but just because it is human, and therefore partakes of the Divine. If it be asked what divinity, above all others, is worshipped in this art, the answer will be the "*Deus Caritatis*," the God of Pity and of Love.

CLAUDE PHILLIPS.